



Le Métis

∞ EST. 1871 ∞

YOUR RED RIVER MÉTIS GOVERNMENT'S BI-WEEKLY NEWS.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

November 8th is a special day in Canada – it's a day where we recognize and honour Red River Métis Veterans, and all Indigenous Veterans, who stood proud and offered their service in defence of democracy. They signed up for duty, knowing that they might be asked to make the ultimate sacrifice for people they did not know, and for a country that had done them great harm throughout history.

The personal integrity, fighting spirit, and sense of honour required of our Citizens to volunteer their lives under these circumstances cannot be understated. It must be respected. This is why it's vital that we have a special day to honour Indigenous Veterans in this country. As Manitobans, we should have an even deeper sense of pride about this day, because our province was the first to begin recognizing the day in 1994.

It would be ideal if the world remembered the high cost of war so strongly that modern-day conflict did not exist. However, we know this is not true – global conflict is very real, and in some ways, seems to be growing. We must remember and honour our Veterans of the past and those serving now, with the knowledge in our hearts that we ourselves, or our children or grandchildren, may once again be called upon to go to a foreign country and fight in defence of the freedoms we enjoy today.

I commend our Red River Métis Government and Minister Shawn Nault for their work to honour our Red River Métis Veterans and all Indigenous

Veterans during this year's Indigenous Veterans Day ceremony. I also commend the St. Laurent Local for their partnership at the grassroots level, ensuring communication and coordination between our government, the Legion, and the Rural Municipality. I am so proud to see that our Nation's Veterans are increasingly being honoured and recognized through memorial services, commemorations, and monuments. Those who attended our Indigenous Veterans Day service in St. Laurent would have seen 93 banners running all the way down Veterans Memorial Drive, all honouring local Veterans. I congratulate the Rural Municipality and the St. Laurent Legion #250 – the only Métis legion in Canada – for their work to make this initiative happen.

I know there are other initiatives happening all over Canada and the world, including the *Indigenous Legacy Project*, which honours our Veterans who were killed while fighting to liberate the Netherlands. I also thank the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association for their initiative to find, honour, and remember Indigenous Veterans and those who lost their lives. And of course, Selkirk residents and visitors will be familiar with the Dufferin Gang monument, which commemorates the 28 men and three women who enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces during WWII, who all lived on Dufferin Street in Selkirk.

Our Nation has a long memory, and we pride ourselves on knowing our history well. Because of this, I'm confident that there will be more and more events, books, and monuments honouring the sacrifices of our relatives and Ancestors, so that they, like our Nation, will never again be forgotten by this country. This is what I fought for over two decades to have remembered, and I am so proud to see that it is coming to life.

Citizens know that when I travel overseas, I look for churches. I spend time in prayer wherever I go, and often reflect on the sacrifices of our Veterans in these countries. I have also been privileged to visit the gravesites of our Veterans who were laid to rest in foreign soil, so far away from our Homeland and their families and descendants. But I want to assure our Citizens that the final resting places of our Veterans are being very well cared for in these countries. Their resting places are tended with such care and reverence, and respect for the sacrifices of our soldiers. I have even spoken with the people who care for the grounds, and you can see that they fully understand that they are caring for our loved ones who made the ultimate sacrifice for their freedoms. While I know it is hard for families who cannot visit these fallen heroes on a regular basis,

I also know they would be deeply moved by the care these gravesites still receive to this day.

I also thank all Canadians who have served or are serving in our military. I spent time in reflection and gratitude on Remembrance Day, thinking about all who laid down their lives in defence of democracy, or who came home damaged or broken because of what they saw and experienced during their time in armed conflict.

I thank all Red River Métis who answer the call to service, from the Victory of Frog Plain in 1816, all the way to more recent conflicts and peacekeeping activities. I also extend greetings to Colonel David Grebstad – our highest-ranking Red River Métis Citizen in the Canadian Armed Forces – for attending our second annual Indigenous Veterans Day event, and for his successful and dedicated career in Canada's military.

I also thank the Veterans in our Cabinet – John Fleury, Andrew Carrier, Jack Park, and Shawn Nault – for their service.

You are our heroes – today, tomorrow, and forever.

Until we gather again, I send my well wishes to Citizens who are honouring our traditions by harvesting from our Homeland to feed family and community. Stay safe and remember – your Red River Métis Government has your back.

I also offer my prayers to all our families, Citizens, friends, and neighbours, and my deepest condolences to those who have been caused to grieve.

Meeqwetch,

President David Chartrand. LL.D. hon. Q.M. ∞

RED RIVER MÉTIS WOMEN TAKE CENTRE STAGE WITH LI KEUR: RIEL’S HEART OF THE NORTH

Dr. Suzanne Steele always knew that there was a story to be told through music, dance, and language that could highlight her love of the River Métis Homeland and its people. *Li Keur: Riel’s Heart of the North*, is that work of imagination.

This piece of historical fiction follows 21st-century Joséphine-Marie, who is transported to 1870s Montana through a grandmother’s storytelling. She encounters Josette, a sharpshooting runaway travelling with a disguised Louis Riel, on the run from assassins, and the last buffalo brigades. During their adventures, Josette falls in love with Riel.

The personification of the themes of the show – jealousy, destiny, deprivation, and torment – are represented by the Black Geese of Fate. However, our leads find comfort in choruses of ancestral ghosts, the bison brigades, and the women of their people, as they try to save themselves and their Nation.

Dr. Suzanne Steele – librettist, scholar, and storyteller of this production – knew from the beginning she wanted to adopt a women-centric lens.

“What I decided very early on is that I realized how important women have been and continue to be to our cultures, our Indigenous cultures, at the heart of this continent,” she said.

Director Simon Miron, a two-spirited, French-speaking Red River Métis Citizen, was tasked with the responsibility of executing Steele’s vision.

“Women are heavily underrepresented in history. I think that great leaders can lead in different ways, and we often focus on large gestures to define great leadership. We view much of history from a patriarchal lens,” said Miron. “But there are so many unknown women who carried on the Michif culture to bring us to where we are today. After Riel was killed, others had to lead. I think it’s important to acknowledge that.”

Julie Lumsden, a Red River Métis Citizen who plays Rose/Marguerite in the production, is grateful to be a part of a production that highlights the perspectives of Indigenous women in historic depictions.

“It isn’t surprising to anyone that women have been usually glossed over in most histories. I think that is especially true in Canada,” she said. “Who were these women? What were their lives like? How did



To maintain authenticity, Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and translators joined the production to help with pronunciation and historical accuracy.

they survive? We know that they were an integral part of our community and our livelihoods, but we know so little about them. It’s empowering to give them a voice, a story, and a name in *Li Keur*.”

Camryn Dewar, a Red River Métis member of the chorus, noted that this performance challenges typical opera norms.

“We see women create the universe at the beginning of the opera, and throughout, we see them heal themselves, the land, and each other. There are few narratives that are so female-centric



This summer, cast members and the artistic team came together over the course of a week to workshop the opera.

in general, but especially in the operatic sphere,” she said. “I feel inspired by the female characters in this show, and I hope that this story will inspire other Indigenous women and girls as well.”

The show features traditional music, dancing, fiddling, beadwork, and languages, including Michif and French.

“This is a very Indigenous approach to the opera, and what that means is that Riel is not the centre of attention. Nobody is. It’s very much a collaborative, and it’s an ensemble piece,” said Steele. “So, while he has a big role, he’s not the only one who has a big role.”

The organizers of *Li Keur* hired as many Indigenous people for the cast and crew as they could. Steele hopes that this show provides an opportunity to uplift Indigenous performers and encourage these artists to

continue pursuing their dreams, leading to more roles being filled and more Indigenous-focused productions.

The work with various Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and translators has been one of the many highlights of the cast and crew’s experience.

“We’ve had so many wonderful visits with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and just the whole cast and crew in general. It’s rare to have this many Indigenous people working on the same project,” said Miron. “So being able to sit down with them over the breaks and share stories is probably the best and most important part of this process for me. Because when it’s all said and done, I think the relationships we build are really the best part of any arts project.”

“Li Keur”, which translates to “the heart” in Michif, is the perfect word to use for this production – with every cast and crew member putting their heart into this performance.

“The most exciting (part for me) is now that it’s all coming together, the heartbeat is coming, and that is through the fiddles, Alex’s feet, his footwork, and the dancers,” Steele said, referring to Red River Métis composer and fiddler Alex Kusturok. “You guys are not going to know what hit you. It’s going to be fabulous.”

As a proud Red River Métis performer, Lumsden has a personal connection to this show and has felt privileged to be a part of its production.

“To have our stories not only represented by Indigenous bodies onstage but woven into every facet of this production – from the libretto to design, to the direction, and choreography – means that we get to delve into our community in an authentic, real, and world realizing way,” she said.

Li Keur: Riel’s Heart of the North opens on November 18 at the Centennial Concert Hall. For more information, visit mbopera.ca.



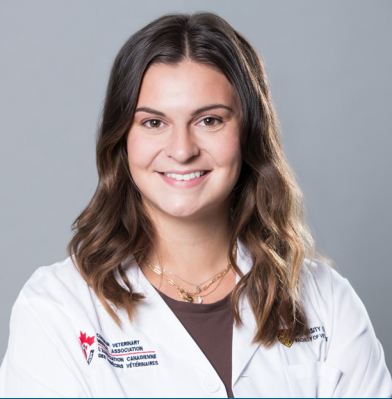
VISIT THE CENTENNIAL CONCERT HALL

Our Red River Métis National Heritage Centre exhibit relocated from the Winnipeg Richardson International Airport to display at the Centennial Concert Hall for the next 12 months. Thank you to the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation for sharing our Red River Métis culture with your guests!

Visit centennialconcerthall.com to check out upcoming events at the Centennial Concert Hall and see the exhibit.



ENRICHING YOUR LEARNING EXPERIENCES THROUGH TRAVEL – a Red River Métis student’s summer in South Africa



From her early years in university, Katherine Fleury knew that she wanted to incorporate travel into her education. By participating in as many programs, conferences, and research trips as possible, the academic knew these experiences would further enrich her learning.

This past July, the Red River Métis veterinary student had the chance to participate in the Association of Commonwealth Universities summer school held at Stellenbosch University in South Africa, where she was able to explore the theme of truth and reconciliation: from apartheid to transitional justice.

Being surrounded by all different perspectives in the program created a safe space to explore topics as serious as truth and reconciliation at an international level.

Fleury received funding throughout her schooling, and encourages other Red River Métis students to explore their options prior to post-secondary education.

“It does help once you’re aware that it exists, and truly there are so many scholarships nowadays for Métis students and Indigenous students. I think that’s part of the truth and reconciliation,” she said. “That’s one of the ways in which we (Indigenous students) are benefiting from it is that they have these calls to action to increase funding.”

“TO HAVE OUR STORIES NOT ONLY REPRESENTED BY INDIGENOUS BODIES ONSTAGE BUT WOVEN INTO EVERY FACET OF THIS PRODUCTION – FROM THE LIBRETTO TO DESIGN, TO THE DIRECTION, AND CHOREOGRAPHY – MEANS THAT WE GET TO DELVE INTO OUR COMMUNITY IN AN AUTHENTIC, REAL, AND WORLD REALIZING WAY.” – JULIE LUMSDEN, RED RIVER MÉTIS PERFORMER

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